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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: APRIL 07, 2009

Summary: All newspapers, without exception, highlighted Ambassador Holbrooke and Admiral Mullen's Islamabad visit, and their meetings with top Pakistani officials Tuesday. Their objective to "eliminate Al Qaeda and Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan" also received prominent coverage. Also highlighted on the front pages was the government's decision to "formulate an integrated national security policy to curb terrorism and extremism." President Obama's remarks that the "U.S. was not, and never will be, at war with Islam" garnered extensive media coverage. All major dailies reported that "three female workers and a driver of a USAID-funded NGO were allegedly killed by militants in Mansehra."

Most major dailies ran editorials on the current wave of terror and suicidal attacks and the precarious security situation of the country. The prestigious English language daily, "Dawn" noted that "while it is important to remember that defeating militancy will be a long, difficult and messy affair, Pakistanis have the right to question the state's response so far in many, many areas." Whereas, the mass circulation Urdu daily, "Jang," wrote: "If the U.S. wants to see Pakistan's role in the anti-terror drive as decisive, then it (U.S.) will have to pay attention to anti-Pakistan activities of India inside Afghanistan." Commenting on the Ambassador Holbrooke and Admiral Mullen's current visit to Islamabad, the center-right national daily "The Nation," observed that they had come "armed with the proverbial carrot and stick, as the U.S. has increased troops in Afghanistan by 17,000 to be deployed in South of the country, which means heightened activity alongside the Durand line." End Summary.

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News Stories  
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"U.S. Officials Urge Steps To Eliminate Safe Havens" "Dawn" (04/07)

"U.S. special envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen arrived in Islamabad on Monday for talks with civil and defence officials and the political leadership on combating militancy and extremism in the region. They called on President Asif Ali Zardari and discussed with him U.S. President Barack Obama's new strategy. According to sources, the U.S. officials called for an effective strategy to eliminate Al Qaeda and Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan, which they alleged were being to carry out attacks against NATO forces in Afghanistan. They promised that the U.S. would not walk away from Pakistan."

"Taliban Shoora Hiding In Balochistan, Says Admiral Mullen" "Daily Times" (04/07)

"The top leadership of the Taliban is hiding in Balochistan province, Admiral Mike Mullen, the U.S. Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, has said. Pakistan lies at the core of America's strategic concerns, said Richard Holbrooke, the new U.S. Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Holbrooke and Admiral Mullen were talking informally to a select group of invitees to dinner at U.S. Ambassador Anne Patterson's house in the U.S. Embassy compound last night."

"Pakistan Fighting Terror For Survival: Zardari" "Dawn" (04/07)

"President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday told top U.S. officials his country was fighting terrorism for its own survival and would not succumb to pressure by militants, a statement issued by the presidency quoted Mr. Zardari as telling Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Richard Holbrooke, special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, during a meeting on Monday night."

"In No Way Will Government Give In To Taliban: Zardari" "The News" (04/07)

"President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday said the government would not succumb to any pressure by militants, adding the process of dialogue would be initiated with those who lay down arms and do not challenge writ of the government. 'Military action is only one aspect of the solution and that the government is pursuing the 3Ds (Dialogue, Development, Deterrence) strategy,' he said while talking to U.S. State Department's special representative on Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke and Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, who called him at the Presidency in Islamabad on Monday night."

"New Strategy On The Cards To Stem Insurgency" "Dawn" (04/07)

"The government decided on Monday to formulate an integrated national security policy to curb terrorism and extremism. The decision was taken at a meeting, presided over by Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, after a thorough review the security situation, the increase in incidents of terrorism, especially suicide attacks in Punjab."

"Special Force Planned To Curb Terrorism" "Dawn" (04/07)

"The Government has decided to form a special anti-terrorism force to curb terrorism and suicide bombing. An Interior Ministry official told 'Dawn' on Monday."

"U.S. Not At War With Islam, Says Obama" "The News" (04/07)

"'The United States is not and never will be at war with Islam,' Obama said, in a major address to the Turkish parliament on the final leg of his tour of Europe. Washington is seeking 'broad engagement' with Muslim countries, he said, adding: 'We will listen carefully, bridge misunderstanding... We will be respectful, even when we do not agree.' Obama announced he would unveil in the coming months 'specific programs' to enhance education and health care and boost prosperity in Muslim countries by expanding trade and investment."

"Pakistan, U.S. Disagree On Al Qaeda Threat: NYT" "The Nation" (04/07)

"Pakistan's political and military circles don't agree with the United States that the threat from Al-Qaeda and the Taliban is a dire one as they view India as the enemy, The New York Times said Monday, while citing analysts."

"Obama's Vision For Nukes Free World Borrows From Pakistan Thesis" "The News" (04/07)

"U.S. President Barack Obama's historic pronouncement in Prague the other day to lead the world into a future without nuclear weapons borrows heavily from a Pakistan theses, first spelled out by founder of Pakistan's peaceful nuclear program Zulfikar Ali Bhutto 37 years ago in 1972. While laying foundation of Pakistan's first nuclear power reactor in Karachi, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had put forward the

proposal for a nuclear weapons free zone in South Asia."

"Obama Leaning Towards Pakistan Army, ISI" "The News" (04/07)

"As President Obama promotes his new plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan, there's a little-noticed part of the strategy that draws on psychology more than bullets. It involves an effort by Joint Chiefs Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen, CENTCOM Commander Gen. David Petraeus, and other top U.S. officials to establish closer ties with the heads of Pakistan's military and intelligence establishments."

"ISI Has Contacts With Extremists: Gates" "Dawn" (04/07)

"The ISI's contacts with the Hikmatyar, Haqqani and the Nazir groups are a real concern for the United States, says U.S. Secretary of Defence Robert Gates. In a recent interview to an Afghan television channel, Mr. Gates also expressed concern over Pakistan's agreement with the militants in Swat saying that such deals only allow the militants to reassemble and revive their strength."

"U.S. Government Seeks Funds to Deploy 50 More Drones" "Dawn" (04/07)

"U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates on Monday sought funds for 50 additional unmanned aircraft, same as those used against suspected terrorist targets in Pakistan's tribal areas."

"Drone Attacks Threat To Country's Sovereignty: Parliamentary Body" "The News" (04/07)

"The Parliamentary Committee on National Security on Monday reiterated its stance of condemning the continuing U.S. drone attacks in the tribal areas and termed it a threat to Pakistan's sovereignty, asking the Obama administration to stop these attacks immediately."

"U.S. Stresses Need To Deal With Terror Threat" "The News" (04/07)

"The United States, reacting to a Taliban leader's threats of further terrorist attacks in Pakistan, underscored the need for continued efforts to deal with the menace of terrorism as the problem is not going to go away soon. The State Department said Washington is under no illusion that the terrorists are trying to hit the U.S. and its allies but added 'we have to keep working hard to fight terrorism.' Spokesman Robert Wood said the Pakistani government understands the terrorism threat to their country."

"U.S. Strategy For Afghanistan Lacks Political Component" "Daily Times" (04/07)

"NWFP Governor Owais Ahmed Ghani has expressed concern that the new U.S. administration may not be able to meet the goals set in a new policy for Afghanistan, as it lacks the 'key component' of a political solution. 'Where is the political strategy?' said the governor in an interview with 'Daily Times.' 'It is still missing ... I do not see it.'"

"Taliban Vow To Defend Pakistan Against U.S. Attack" "The News" (04/07)

"Taliban in North Waziristan Agency on Monday warned of severe backlash if the U.S. or NATO attacked Pakistan, pledging that valiant tribesmen would defend their motherland side by side Pakistan Army."

"Three Female NGO Workers, Driver Shot Dead In Mansehra" "The News" (04/07)

"Three female workers of a USAID-funded project run by a non-governmental organisation, Rise International, and their driver were allegedly killed by militants in Mansehra on Monday."

"Swat Flogging Case: SC Irked By Officials' 'Helplessness'" "Dawn" (04/07)

"The Supreme Court, which has taken notice of public flogging of a teenage girl in Swat, came down hard on the government on Monday for its helplessness in establishing the writ of the law in the troubled

valley and sought fortnightly reports from top officials on progress into investigation into the incident."

"U.S. Expresses Relief Over Solecki's Release" "Dawn" (04/07)

"The United States voiced relief on Monday after an American official working for the United Nations was released unharmed in Pakistan following two months in captivity. 'We're obviously relieved, as is his family,' State Department spokesman Robert Wood told reporters."

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Editorials/Op-eds  
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"Unabated Militancy," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/07)

"While it is important to remember that defeating militancy will be a long, difficult and messy affair, Pakistanis have the right to question the state's response so far in many, many areas. Consider Baitullah Mehsud. Ensconced in his quasi-kingdom in South Waziristan, the man has seemingly let loose a reign of terror on Pakistan cities in recent months.... Can the Pakistan security forces do absolutely nothing to nab or attack this man? And if our military resources are indeed so poor, can we not elicit the cooperation of the Americans to target him? Surely doing nothing - which, other than periodic denunciations by public officials, is what we are doing right now - is not an option."

"Experts' Piece Of Advice For President Obama," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (04/07)

"U.S. defense and diplomatic experts have advised President Obama to focus on Indian engagements in Afghanistan, and must remove Pakistan's apprehensions on this issue. It is clear that the Indian operatives are involved in terror acts in Pakistan. 24 Indian consulates have become training centers for RAW (Indian intelligence agency) agents. If the U.S. wants to see Pakistan's role in the anti-terror drive as decisive, then it (U.S.) will have to pay attention to anti-Pakistan activities of India inside Afghanistan, or else the dream of enduring peace will on no account come true."

"A Reason For Concern," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (04/07)

"Till recently, top U.S. officials have been visiting Pakistan to get briefing on the volatile situation in the region.... They have come armed with the proverbial carrot and stick, as the U.S. has increased troops in Afghanistan by 17,000, to be deployed in South of the country, which means heightened activity alongside the Durand line. The second aspect of the Af-Pak policy is much more alarming.... Meanwhile, it is disconcerting to know that the Americans are bent upon continuing drone attacks. What is worse, the option of expanding the area of their operation into Balochistan is also under consideration."

"Requirements For National Strategy Against Terrorism," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (04/07)

"The Government of Pakistan needs to reconsider its pro-America policy before seeking help and cooperation from the political forces and public to ward off the threat terrorism poses to country's security. If the government is incapable to reconsider its pro-America policy alone then it should convene a roundtable conference of all the political and religious parties to devise the strategy."

"Reduction In Nuclear Weapons, Obama Should Set An Example," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (04/07)

"U.S. President Barack Obama has announced that he will undertake concrete steps to purge the world of nuclear weapons.... This is a fact that abundance of nuclear weapons poses a grave threat to the world's peace and security, but it was the U.S. that used nuclear

weapons against Japan.... Obama should get rid of all the U.S. nuclear weapons before asking other nuclear powers to follow suit.... No Independent and sovereign state would agree to unilateral reduction in its stock of nuclear weapons."

"U.S. President's Plan To Purge World Of Nuclear Weapons," an editorial note in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (04/07)

"President Barack Obama has unveiled the plan to purge the world of nuclear weapons.... This proposal by the U.S. President can be declared a welcome development only if all the [nuclear weapon] state are treated alike. Moreover, any such campaign should start with the dismantling of American nuclear weapons."

"American Officials' Pakistan Visit," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (04/07)

"The U.S. should realize the fact that the difficulties Pakistan is facing today are the result of its aggressive war policy that it adopted in the campaign against terrorism. President Obama needs to consider the content of the letter written to him by Democratic and Republican Congressmen, asking him to reconsider the policy of more troops for Afghanistan and learn a lesson from the Soviet debacle in Afghanistan."

"Holbrooke's Two-Headed Hydra," an op-ed by Anjum Niaz in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/07)

"President Obama's point-man for 'Af-Pak' Richard Holbrooke is hunkered at the American embassy in Islamabad. And so is U.S. Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen. The Americans are in Pakistan to kill the two-headed hydra: militancy and anti-U.S. sentiments. The monster meanwhile threatens to rain destruction on mainland America itself. The ultimate nightmare is the monster's control of Pakistan's nuclear assets."  
"Hard Choices," an op-ed by Talat Masood in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/07)

"Pakistan finds itself caught between the militants on one side and the Americans on the other and a combination of factors are precipitating and determining the course of events... The question arises, has Pakistan army the will and capacity to fight a protracted and determined battle against militants? The more important question is whether the civilian government has the ability and leadership to galvanize the nation for supporting major counterinsurgency operations, in case militant groups do not agree to a peaceful settlement."

"Obama's Pakistan Plan," an op-ed by Shahid Javed Burki in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/07)

"This time President Obama has promised to be involved in Pakistan's affairs in a different way.... What is likely to be an involvement over an extended period of time is the goal of modernizing the Pakistani society, polity and economy. This will help America with the world of Islam since Pakistan is the second largest Muslim country in the world. Not only that it occupies an exceptionally delicate geographic space, one that is very important for American's strategic interests."

"Drone Attacks Will Continue," an op-ed by Air Marshal (R) Ayaz Ahmed Khan in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (04/07)

"The drone missile strikes have continued since three years, but the terrorist capabilities to launch suicide attacks, ambush, kidnap for ransom, and strike at random in Pakistan and Afghanistan remain intact. Neither Washington, nor Islamabad could devise alternate plans to reduce the terrorists' offensive capabilities and abilities of movement, grouping and attack."

"Public Support For Counter-Terrorism," an op-ed by Mehlaqa Samdani in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (04/07)

"With respect to U.S. drone strikes and Pakistani military operations, there is growing acceptance in the U.S. that these are justified if they kill 'suspected terrorists.' However, killing people because they are terrorists, before they have been declared as such by courts of law, amounts to assassination and murder."

"The Long Road To Talibanization," an op-ed by Nosheen Ali in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/07)

"The crisis in FATA and Swat has increasingly become reduced to a narrative of the evil Taliban versus the helpless state and society.... Instead of looking for saviors - be it a politician, a judge, or a commando, we need to collectively engage in holistic institution-building.... And most importantly, we need to question the self-serving arrogance and impunity with which our military claims to define and defend our 'national security.'"

"Conspiracies Of Anti-Islamic Forces," an editorial in the Karachi-based right-wing pro-Jamaat-e-Islami Urdu daily "Jasarat" (cir. 3,000) (04/07)

"The flogging incident is used as an excuse to criticize Islamic laws, and those elements that do not have understanding of Islamic tenets unleashed uninterrupted attacks on Islam. Actually the Islamic penal code was their real target, and not the incident. Now people are blaming that Taliban do not believe in Sharia laws, whereas the fact is that these elements do not believe in Sharia who are disparaging Islamic laws in the garb of this incident."

"In The Name of 'Peace'," an op-ed by Dr. Farzana Bari in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/07)

"One is shocked, appalled and disgusted to see such blatant violation of human rights by the Taliban, and angry with the federal and the government of the NWFP that are shameless defending their capitulation to the terror of the Tehrik-e-Taliban in the shape of the 'Swat peace deal.'... No government functionary can act in Swat without the consent of Tehrik-e-Taliban. Although the president of Pakistan has ordered an inquiry into this case, people doubt whether this inquiry will result in anything substantive..."

"India And Balochistan," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (04/07)

"India is fomenting trouble in Balochistan and has big money invested in Iran to back up this penetration from the Iranian side. More ominously, India is working in tandem with the regional states to prevent the filling of the post-NATO power vacuum in Afghanistan by Pakistan which is seeking 'strategic depth' against India."

"Free At Last," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (04/07)

"The release of John Solecki, the head of the UN Refugee Agency Office in Quetta, is a piece of good news that is rare in Pakistan these days.... We hope that the happy ending to this distressing episode will not close the chapter on the political injustices in Pakistan's most under-developed province that provoke Baloch nationalists to resort to extreme measures."

"Safe And Sound," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/07)

"We are thankful that John Solecki has survived. He was lucky; as some high-profile kidnap victims come to a grisly and miserable end. Kidnapping in general terms, usually by criminals and not by persons who claim to be ideologically or politically driven, is on the rise across the nation...."

"Arrest The Drift," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (04/07)

"While the Islamabad attack was owned by Tehrik Taliban Pakistan chief Baitullah Mehsud, another TTP leader Hakimullah Mehsud accepted responsibility for the Chakwal suicide attack. Both said these were conducted to avenge the U.S. drone attacks. It is a dastardly act to punish innocent people for acts committed by the U.S."

"Facing Reality," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (04/07)

"The sectarian conflict that Chakwal never knew has taken a hold there. This is the doing of our own people. Cover-ups and a refusal to face what is happening to our country will take us nowhere."

"Chakwal Slaughter," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (04/07)

"It proves that the terrorists have now decided to hit religious places to create a new wave of sectarianism in the country. This phenomenon is highly alarming.... Besides terrorism, Pakistan is already facing too many crises. The country needs to get out of this quagmire before it is too late."  
Patterson